



# CITY OF MANCHESTER

## Department of Health

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### Press Release

**For Immediate Release**

**April 8, 2003**

**Contact Person: Rich DiPentima, RN, MPH      624-6466 Ext. 339**

### **Increased Chickenpox Cases Reported**

Manchester Elementary Schools have reported an increased number of chickenpox cases recently. Over the past week, 31 cases have been reported from Northwest Elementary. Chickenpox is a very contagious disease caused by the varicella-zoster virus. It usually begins with a fever and itchy rash. The rash starts with crops of small red bumps on the stomach or back and spreads to the face and limbs. The red bumps rapidly become blistered, oozy and then crust over. Some individuals only have a few blisters while others may be totally covered. Chickenpox is contagious from two days before the rash appears to when the blisters crust over, usually within six days of the rash appearance. It is spread by close contact such as, sharing breathing space or direct touching contact with infected persons. Illness usually

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Begins 14-16 days after exposure to an infected person. Chickenpox is generally not a serious disease in otherwise healthy children. Adults may, occasionally become severely ill. Chickenpox can cause serious complications in a pregnant woman or a person with a weak immune system who has not had the disease or been adequately immunized. These individuals should contact their health care provider if exposed to a case of chickenpox. Children with chickenpox are required to be excluded from school or day care until the rash bumps scab over.

Recently a vaccine has been approved for the prevention of chickenpox. While this vaccine is not currently required for school or day care attendance, parents are encouraged to contact their child's health care provider and have their children immunized. The Manchester Health Department also offers free chickenpox immunizations. Contact the Health Department at 624-6466 for more information.

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